

## CHAPTER 5

# Toasting

Toasting is a means of expressing good will toward others on a social occasion. It may take place at receptions, dinners, dining-ins or wetting-down parties.

Toasting originated with the English custom of flavoring wine with a piece of browned and spiced toast. In 1709 Sir Richard Steels wrote of a lady whose name was supposed to flavor wine liked spiced toast. Thus evolved the notion that the individual or institution honored with a toast would add a flavor to the wine.

Today we honor individuals and/or institutions by raising our glasses in a salute while expressing good wishes and drinking to that salute. Etiquette calls for all to participate in a toast. Even nondrinkers should at least raise the glass to their lips.

Those offering a toast, men or women, should stand, raise their glass in a salute while uttering the expression of good will. Meanwhile, the individual(s) being toasted should remain seated, nod in acknowledgment, and refrain from drinking to one's own toast. Later, they may stand, thank the others, and offer a toast in return.

The one who initiates the toasting is the host at a very formal occasion, Mr. Vice/Madame Vice at a dining-in, or any guest when the occasion is very informal. The subject of the toast is always dependent upon the type of occasion. General toasts would be "To your health," or to "Success and happiness," while special occasions such as weddings and birthday would require toasts more specific in nature such as "To Mary and John for a lifetime of happiness and love" in the case of a wedding, or on a birthday "May your next 25 years be as happy and successful as your first 25 years."

## CEREMONIAL TOASTS

When the formality of ceremonial toasts is to be observed on state occasions, the order and subject of all toasts should be arranged beforehand between the host and his/her ranking foreign guest. The host initiates such toasts, during or after dessert wine is served. The experienced guest is always careful to leave enough champagne in his/her glass toward the end of the meal to be able to join in several toasts.

A toast to a Chief of State is always drunk standing. The toast to the ruler of a country of a foreign guest of honor is always the first toast proposed on a state occasion. A few minutes after the guests have seated themselves again, the senior representative of the country honored rises and proposes a toast to the ruler of the host's country. All guests rise again to drink this toast.

These initial toasts may be followed by others to the countries or the services represented by the guests, and/or the guest of honor and the host. All guests rise again to drink this toast.

When the occasion is an official and formal one, the order and subject of all toasts should be arranged before hand. It is the responsibility of the host to inform the guest of honor which toasts will be offered and when. The rule here is that the host proposes all toasts and the guest answers in kind.

*Example:* Suppose the occasion is a black tie dinner hosted by the Chief of Naval Operations in honor of the Ambassador of Great Britain. The following would apply:

USN CNO (Host/Hostess) would stand after the dessert wine has been served and would raise his/her glass saying, *"To Her Majesty, the Queen."*

All guests should stand and raise their glasses and toast the Queen. This may be followed by the playing of the British National Anthem.

Moments later, the Ambassador would stand, raise his/her glass and say, *"To the President of the United States."*

All guests would stand and toast the President. This may be followed by the U.S. National Anthem.

Other toasts may follow, such as:

USN CNO: *"To the Chief of Naval Staff and First Sea Lord."*

British Ambassador: *"To the Chief of Naval Operations."*

USN CNO: *"May the bonds of friendship which tie our navies together continue to strengthen in the future."*

British Ambassador: *"To the great traditions of the U.S. Navy and her gallant leaders."*

When the guests represent more than one nation, the host/hostess proposes a collective toast to the heads of their several states, naming them in the order of the seniority of the representatives present. The highest-ranking foreign officer among the guests will respond on behalf of all the guests by toasting the head of state of the host's country.

Since governments and titles change, it is essential to verify their accuracy.

NOTE: The position is toasted and individual's name is not mentioned.

## BRITISH CUSTOMS

At an official dinner given by a British official for a high-ranking U.S. officer, the former rises during or after dessert to toast the President of the United States, and then the orchestra, if present, plays "The Star Spangled Banner." After the guests are seated, the guest of honor rises to toast *"Her Majesty, the Queen,"* and the orchestra plays "God Save the Queen." If other monarchies are represented at the dinner, the honored guest would say, *"Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II."* These toasts are sometimes followed by short speeches and toasts to the services represented.

At regular mess dinners in the Royal Navy, the senior member of the mess proposes the toast, *"The Queen,"* and all present in a low voice repeat, *"The Queen"* and sip the toast. If an American officer is a personal dinner guest in the mess where a nightly toast to the Queen is drunk, the mess president might propose a toast to the U.S. Navy after the usual toast to the Queen. The American would then properly reply with a toast to the Royal Navy. It should be remembered that at Anglo-American dinners, the British officer would toast, *"The President of the United States,"* and the senior American would reply, *"Her Majesty, the Queen."*

## FRENCH AND ITALIAN CUSTOMS

Officers of these navies often preface a toast with the phrase, *"I have the honor to..."* At a dinner for a senior U.S. officer, the French host/hostess may say, *"I have the honor to propose a toast to the President of the United States."* The guest of honor might properly reply, *"It is my great honor to propose a toast to the President of the French Republic."*

## SCANDINAVIAN CUSTOMS

Ceremonial toasts are less usual than in the Scandinavian countries. Rather, the host/hostess "skoals" each guest. No one drinks wine until after the host/hostess has offered a general skool of welcome. Skoaling continues throughout the meal among the guests. The ladies must be alert to respond to individual skoals from the gentlemen, for each gentleman skoals the lady sitting at his right at least once.

The procedure is to raise one's glass slightly from the table, and looking directly into your partner's eyes, draw the glass down and toward the body, bow slightly, say *"skool,"* drink and salute again with your glass before putting it down. The skool received must be returned a few minutes later.

Specific customs of individual countries should be understood prior to attending social functions; for example, in Finland, Norway and Sweden, an additional procedure is for the guest of honor to thank the host/hostess with a toast at the end of the meal. The Danes toast the hostess only. In Sweden, the hostess is never skoaled by a guest during a formal or semi-formal dinner.